the Pedis. I saw the two armies, the same day, preparing for the same battle. The Thongas were armed to the teeth, forming a great circle, all standing, shouting their war songs, gesticulating, jumping, imploring their chief to allow them to start. The Pedi warriors were sitting under trees, taking their snuff and apparently as calm as any other day.

During the Gungunyane war, the Thongas were brave, at least those not entirely dependent on the Ngoni king, who had not allowed his warriors to kill white men. The Rongas of Mpfumu especially showed great courage and endurance, and those who served the Portuguese in their Angola war have been praised as being very steady and reliable.

On the other hand everything seems to prove that military ability is not an ancient feature of the Thonga character, and that it has been imparted to them by the Zulus, who taught them the art of fighting during the last century, pushing them to the front in their battles and calling them "Mabuyandlela," "those who open the way." Before the Ngoni invasion, the Thonga armies were ignorant of the *mukhumbi* viz. the armed circle of warriors which is the basis of the Zulu military system; (See Part IV) : they used to form themselves into a straight line and, in their battles, very few men were killed. They were normal Bantu clans, viz. people living peacefully, occasionally quarrelling with their neighbours. The idea of conquest, of vast dominion, the system of an armed nation which Chaka and his followers pursued, was something new amongst South African Natives and was probably borrowed by Dingiswayo from the Whites. This fact ought not to be ignored.

Under a just European supervision, there is no probability that the Thonga tribe will change its peaceful and mild charcter.

3) *Physical characteristics of the Thongas.* It cannot be said that the Thongas possess a very distinct and unique physical type. They are generally of a dark brown colour, sometimes purely black, much darker than the Suthos. As a whole, their external appearance bears a much closer resemblance to that of the Zulus, but, as regards face and stature, they vary very much. You may meet Thongas with typical negro faces, broad lips, flat

I: Junod M-5 (1895-1909)1927 Thonga

643 But whilst they may be reconciled in ordinary life, these two principles become antagonistic when carried into politics, and this law of succession has been the source of endless disturbances amongst the Thonga clans. It is true that the younger brothers of the chief, when taking his place, are looked on more or less as princes regent, holding office on behalf of their nephew, who is the lawful heir to the throne. They are said to "make him grow" (kurisa) to "keep his tumbler" (hlayisa ndyelo).

But if the former chief died in youth, and if his younger brother has lived and reigned for a long time, and has become very popular, he is very much tempted to appropriate the chieftainship for his own family and to order the tribe to crown his son, to the exclusion of the son of the first chief, who belonged to the elder branch, but who has been more or less forgotten during all these years. This leads to conflicts and fighting. The lawful heir will contest (*banga*, a Zulu word) and a *mubango* (civil war) will follow. Or, if he is not able to fight, he will keep to himself, full of bitterness, and ready to seize the first opportunity of asserting his rights.

643 175 721 Such a usurpation has twice taken place in the Nkuna tribe. It is not easy to know exactly what happened, because there are conflicting statements. Those who hold the chieftainship do not tell the story in the same way as those who consider that they were robbed of their right. This is the testimony of one of the latter, Mbokota, son of Madjubane. There were three brothers, Hoshana, Mbangwa and Ribye (1). During

(1) *Genealogy of the Nkuna family showing why and how contests arose for the succession.*

The names of the chiefs who reigned are thus underlined .....
The names of those who were deprived of the chieftainship, thus ———

1: Junod M-5 (1895-1909)1927 Thonga

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the disturbances caused by the Ngoni invasion, Hoshana fled to the Ñwamba country and lost touch with the main body of the clan which settled in the Transvaal. He however possessed the *ritlatla* (p. 385). On his death the royal appanage was brought to Shiluvane, but it never went back to Hoshana's children, who lost their right for ever. Mbangwa had three children, a daughter, Tibatiba, and two sons, Nyantsiri and Shiluvane. On his death, his younger brother Ribye reigned. He died, and then the chieftainship came back to Mbangwa's children. In the meantime Nyantsiri had died, but he had left two children, Madyubane and Mapsakomo. Madyubane, the elder, was still a child. So Tibatiba, the elder sister, said to Shiluvane : "Take the elephant tusk belonging to the Nkuna royal family and reign in the place of Nyantsiri ; but you have only to 'keep the tumbler' of Madyubane." Shiluvane sold the tusk and bought wives, beads and clothing for himself. Madyubane died some years later ; but he had a younger brother, Mapsakomo, and also a son called Mbokota. The chieftainship ought certainly to have returned to the elder branch. Mbokota told me himself that Shiluvane, before he died, ordered his counsellors to proclaim him as chief. So, on Shiluvane's death, a great contest arose. The headmen came to the capital and asked which son of Shiluvane had been designated by the late chief as his successor. No one dared reply, because there were four men who claimed the chieftainship : Mapsakomo, a younger brother of the legal heir Madyubane, Mbokota the son of Madyubane, Muhlaba and Muholo, both sons of Shiluvane. The great counsellor Shikhibane then said : "I heard Shiluvane say he wished Muhlaba to reign." The headmen accepted this statement, but the other pretenders greatly resented it. Seeing that many Ba-Nkuna were opposed to Muhlaba, Shikhibane assembled the whole tribe in arms to proclaim his protégé. He wanted the army itself to manifest its will. Mbokota, Mapsakomo and Muholo protested. But the warriors took Muhlaba, who was still a young man, and brought him to his new residence in an epic march all through the country during which they sang the war songs. The contest was finally settled by the Boer Authorities ; Captain Dahl, then Native Commissioner for Zoutpansberg,

685 721 *Theft* (ku yiba) is universally condemned, not so much for its immoral character as for the fact that it renders a normal social life impossible. The notion of *individual property*, though it is not developed as in more civilised nations, is nevertheless at the base of the whole Bantu system. The Bantus are agriculturists. They believe that the products of their labour belong to them and that no one else is entitled to appropriate them. The notion of property is in direct relation to work accomplished. (Compare Part IV.)

685 574 202 To steal growing mealies is not usual. A thief breaks off the cob, whilst the master of the field first uproots the stalk and then takes the cobs. If a friend of his who happens to be travelling passes through his gardens and wants to eat a cob, he is quite welcome to do so. He also uproots the stalk, puts it on one side of the road or leans it against a tree and draws a line on the ground from the place where the stalk grew to the spot where he has put it. Perhaps the owner of the field will discover the uprooted stalk after a whole month. If he inquires who has helped himself to his mealies, his friend will say to him : "Did you not see the line ?" And they will laugh over it (hlekelelana). A thief acting hastily would not have had time to draw the line!

685 789 There are certain magical drugs with which people smear mealie stalks (see Part IV) and they assert that, if any one tries to penetrate into their garden to steal, he will have his hand caught and will not be able to get rid of the plant! For some reason or another, these magical methods do not always work. So the injured person has recourse to the tribunal.

685 343 Should the thief be caught in the very act, there is no difficulty! His own field will be taken by the owner of the stolen mealies and he will have to pay a fine of one ox, otherwise the matter will be brought before the Court, and the only difference will be that the fine will be of two or three oxen, one of which will remain in the hands of the chief. (Mankhelu.) If the thief has been clever enough to avoid being caught, if he has stolen from a store hut, Natives are clever detectives and he will probably be discovered. These store huts are generally built in the middle of the field, or in the little bush which surrounds the village ; the grass all around

CHAPTER IV

The Army.

A. WAR-LIKE PROCLIVITIES OF THE THONGAS.

721 726 175 As mentioned in the preliminary chapter (p. 34), in former times the war-like spirit seems to have been but little developed amongst the Thongas. The primitive population possessed no iron weapons, and the invasions which took place from the XV^th^ to the XVIII^th^ century seem to have been peaceful. Conquerors and subjects soon intermarried and no recollection of bloody contests remained. When clans fought against each other, in those remote times, namely before the arrival of the Zulus (1820), they thought they had done doughty deeds when two or three warriors had been killed, and the vanquishers returned home saying: "None of the enemy is left!!" The army used to form in a straight line, not in a circle, as was the case later on under Zulu influence.

175 When the cruel hordes of Manukosi subjugated the plain of Delagoa, all that was changed. Of course the Thonga yimpis were defeated very easily. First of all, those of Maputju and Tembe; in the country of Matjolo, which was afterwards invaded, the chief Mashekane was so stout that he had been surnamed "Mitahomu ni timhondjo" — "the one who swallows an ox, horns and all..." He fought bravely but was also defeated. In Khosen, says Hendrick, an old man who stayed for years in Rikatla and who was then a child, the aborigines were deceived by the perpendicular sticks which the Ba-Ngoni invaders had fixed to their ox-hide shields; they mistook them for reeds and thought they could break them easily; but their three united yimpis, that of Khosen under Mbanyele, of Rikotsho under Makwakwa, and of Shiburi under Shitlhama, were repulsed, broken through by the Zulu phalanx.

175 177 726 703 These Zulus or Ngonis taught the tribes of the plain a system of war much more cruel than the old one: "kill everything," — such is the rule. No exception is made except in the case of women, who are taken prisoners. The Thonga clans readily accepted this new mode of fighting. They adopted the Zulu system wholesale, the proof of which is that all their military terminology is pure Zulu. Their apprenticeship began during the invasion; the Ba-Ngoni seeing that the Thongas had a certain aptness for war, incorporated them into their own regiments and used to send them forward to the attack, as previously mentioned. They praised them by calling them the *Mabuyandlela* — those who prepare the way, — a kind of nickname which the Thongas have kept to this day and of which they were very proud.

721 175 703 However I do not think it would be unfair to the Thongas to assert that the old peaceful basis of their character is still preserved, notwithstanding this influence. We have had an opportunity of judging of their warlike capabilities during the war of 1894-1896 with the Portuguese. (See Appendix X, Short account of two South African wars.) The Natives did not fight from choice. While some of them gave proof of great endurance, and the army fought in some cases with a certain tenacity, Thongas and especially Ba-Ronga did not show themselves very able warriors. Want of discipline, mutual distrust, timidity resulting in frequent retreats, inability to follow up their successes, such were the main causes of their defeat. The wild soldiers of Maputju, who considered themselves the equals of the genuine Zulus, showed their courage only when there was no danger!

B. WAR COSTUME AND WEAPONS.

714 One day when we were comfortably seated under the beautiful tree at our station of Rikatla, a strange looking monster suddenly appeared on the scene, running towards us! The children fled and the women hid themselves... It was Charley, our milk-man, who, with some other warriors, was going to a military review, to be

following way. The bones are consulted, and a special pot, called phokolo, is buried just below the surface of the ground, in the middle of a clean spot well hidden in a dense thicket of thorny shrubs. The victim, a black ram without any white spot, is brought there, and killed in accordance with the ceremonial rites. The grass of the paunch is squeezed over the pot, so that the green liquid drips into it, and the blood is spread all over the ground. Four furrows have been dug in the form of a cross with the pot as a centre, and pointing towards the four cardinal points. Little girls ("who are not yet wise," i. e. they are not yet informed regarding sexual matters) are sent to fetch water and fill the pot until it overflows into the furrows. This being done, they go back to their mothers. The *mbelele* rite will immediately follow (p. 318). This phokolo sacrifice is the religious act in connection with ancestrolatry, the mbelele being actuated by entirely different ideas. The phokolo rite is replaced in the Nkuna clan by the official visit to the graves, accompanied by an old mourning song, and the custom of beating the mounds with sticks ; (whether to awaken the gods or to show them the dissatisfaction of the worshippers, I do not know). In many sacred woods, a living *human victim* is offered to the gods, as already mentioned (p. 383). The phokolo rite is a regular sacrifice attended with bloodshed. 782

In the case of war threatening the country, another offering is made which is called *Mhamba ya Burena, the Offering of Valour*. The general of the army chooses a thorn, a large thorn taken from a munga tree (the Accacia horrida), not a crooked one ; he sucks it without biting it, and emits his saliva saying : "Tsu! You, the ancestor-gods, so and so and so, enemies wish to take your country! Give us valour! May we stab them with this thorn, with the assegai! (Ñwi, psikwembu, man, man, man. Yimpi yi ta, yi ta teka tiko djenu! Hi nyikan burena, hi ba tlhaba hi mutwa lo, hi tlhari!)" This offering resembles the offering of the thorn made by the headman, but it has an entirely different meaning, and it is probable that the kind of thorn employed is different. 721 782

Another national act of worship, which recalls the rite of the nkanye twig in funeral ceremonies, is performed with the aid of the *great mhamba*, to which I have already referred 778 782